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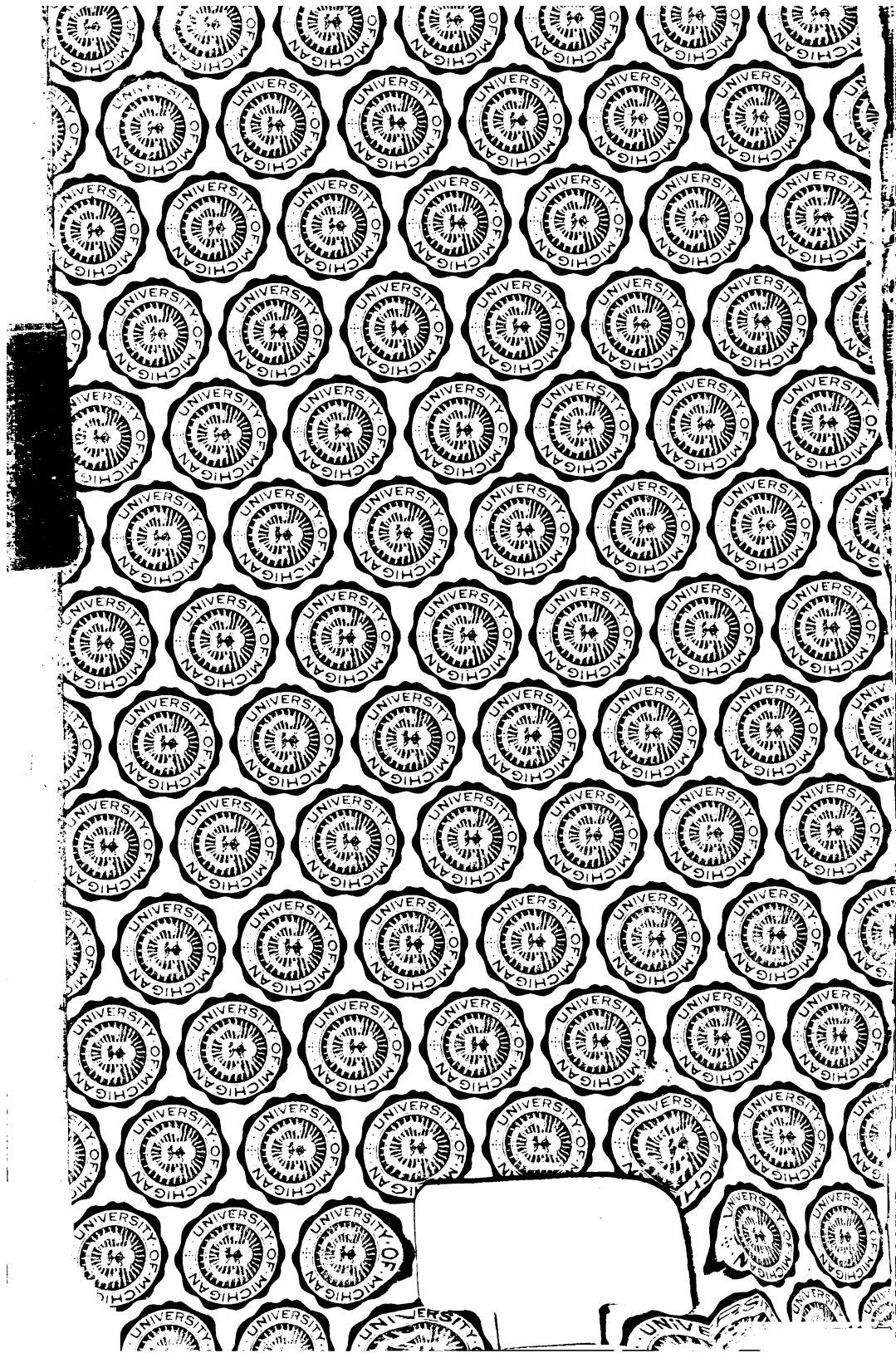
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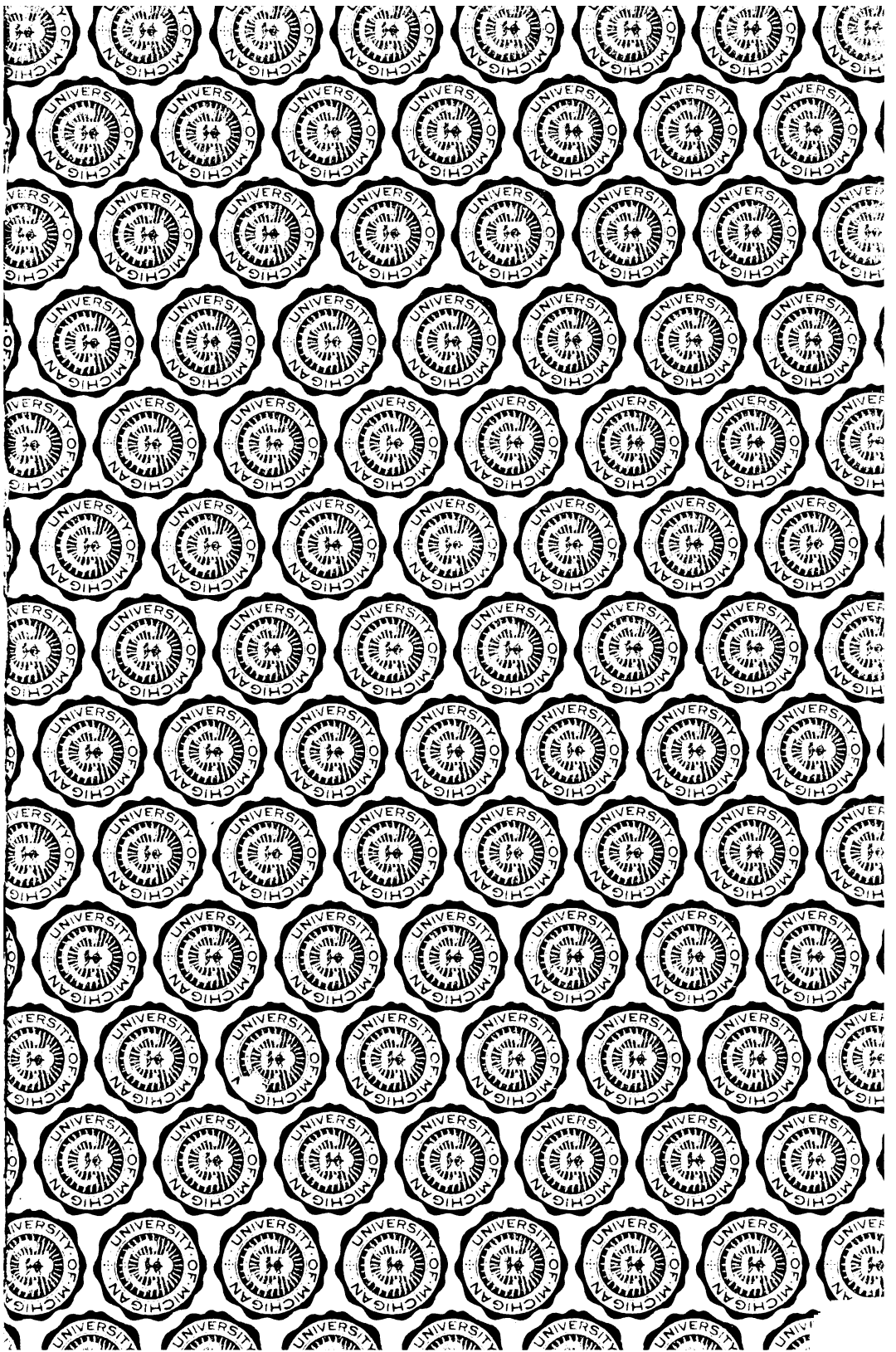
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BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES A. WILLIAMSON

A SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

Brigadier and Brevet Major-General

James Alexander Williamson

BY

Major-General Grenville M. ^{Allen}Dodge
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JAMES ALEXANDER WILLIAMSON

PART I.

Brigadier General James Alexander Williamson, a distinguished soldier and citizen of the state of Iowa, died at Jamestown, Rhode Island, on September 7, 1902.

As a long-time friend and comrade of General Williamson, and as a citizen of Iowa, it is a pleasure to me to pay the tribute that this distinguished soldier is entitled to, and to make of record his services as a citizen and a soldier.

He was born February 8, 1829, in Columbia, Adair county, Kentucky, of good Scotch-English ancestry. When but a child of three years of age he was taken by his mother, recently become a widow, with the family and the maternal grandparents, to a little settlement on White river, near Indianapolis, Indiana, where he spent his younger days in cultivating the soil, and overcoming the hardships endured by pioneers of those days.

When a boy of 15 years, young Williamson, with his people, again migrated westward to the territory of Iowa. They moved in prairie schooners with ox teams, over the fertile lands of Illinois and into what is now known as Keokuk county, Iowa, one year before it became a state. He did a man's work while yet a boy, laboring hard that every opportunity should be improved in the way of study, and the reading of such books as were available in a new land, and fitted himself to enter Knox college, at Galesburg, Ill., from which he graduated and went to the little town of Lancaster, Keokuk county, where he read law in the office of a fellow townsman, and soon acquired a good practice. He also became interested in various enterprises incident to the development of a new country. He soon obtained the confidence of the people in his town, and was sent to Boston and New York to purchase goods for the business men.

In 1853, when 24 years old, he married Miss Ann W. Gregory, of Birmingham, Van Buren county. A little more

than a year later he took his wife and child to Fort Des Moines, where he became interested in the real estate and banking business.

In 1885 he was a prominent factor in the removal of the Iowa capital from Iowa City to Des Moines, and it was largely through his efforts that this was accomplished. It is a matter of great regret to many citizens of Iowa that he was not permitted to write the story of this event, as he had promised to do for the Annals of Iowa.

The political views of General Williamson in these years, 1855-1860, were democratic. In 1860 he was a delegate to the national convention in Baltimore, which nominated Douglas and Johnson.

The same year Williamson was chairman of the democratic state committee of the state of Iowa, and, as such chairman, called a convention of all persons who wished to avert a civil war, which met in Des Moines in the winter of 1860-61. Few of the large number of persons attending this convention believed there was any danger of war, and were unwilling to seriously consider the question, or the possibility of war, but being born in a slave state, it was Williamson's firm belief that war was inevitable, and from the hour when the first gun was fired in the cause of rebellion no one doubted where he stood. He began to put his business affairs in order, and when the call came he recruited a few men at Des Moines, and with a few men that were recruited by Judge Reed in Dallas county, they were sent to Council Bluffs and were made a part of what was known as the Dodge battery which I was raising at the time I raised the Fourth Iowa. Hon. Caleb Baldwin, a judge of the supreme court of Iowa, and a personal friend of mine, and also of Williamson, recommended Williamson for the position of adjutant of the Fourth Iowa. Williamson told Judge Baldwin that if he did not get a commission he would enlist as a private in one of the companies of the regiment, if it was not full. I did not know Williamson personally, but upon Judge Baldwin's recommendation was glad to accept him. He came to me with a letter from Judge Baldwin or Governor Kirkwood, I forget which, speaking very highly of him.

Soon after he reported and was mustered in, the regiment moved to St. Louis, and camped at Jefferson barracks. It had no arms, tents, uniforms, blankets, cooking utensils—in fact, nothing except the clothes the men had

brought with them from their homes. We were immediately sent from St. Louis to Rolla, and the regiment landed there destitute of every necessity, except guns sufficient to mount guard. On arriving at Rolla, I immediately sent Williamson to St. Louis to obtain the necessary equipment for the regiment. In describing his difficulties in carrying out his orders he said: "I entered upon an experience in the line of duty that was at least novel and unusual, and if I could make a faithful pen or word picture of it I feel sure that but few would believe me. I had been unable even to procure a uniform for myself, and I had to appear, or try to appear, before Major General John C. Fremont, commanding, in citizen's clothes, having nothing about me but my orders to indicate that I belonged to the military service. I never saw General Fremont, although I had appointments with him at unseemly hours. On the occasion of my first or second call I had handed to the chief of staff a correct and proper statement of my business, setting forth the condition of the regiment, and its imperative wants, before it could possibly be of any service to the government. An appointment would be arranged for some unseemly hour, say six o'clock and twenty-three minutes a. m., or some such time, and I was always at the entrance to the headquarters, watch in hand, at the time stated, only to be met by the guard and halted, who, when I explained that I had an appointment with the general commanding, would give an incredulous smile and deny me admission, saying that the general did not see any person until noon, or some later hour. After many weary days I obtained orders for such equipage as could then be had. I procured canteens from a stationery store, clothing from a hardware firm, camp kettles and cooking utensils from dry goods stores, not getting an article from a house that would ordinarily be dealing in the goods furnished. I drew muskets from the arsenal, etc."

These muskets were of Prussian make, and many of them burst at the first firing, and were more dangerous at their butts than at their muzzles.

Lieutenant Williamson was on duty as adjutant of the Fourth Iowa Infantry. He had no military training, practical or theoretical, in fact, was absolutely green in the duties of an adjutant, and naturally made many mistakes, but he studied hard and was anxious to learn, and was ready to obtain knowledge from everybody in the regiment. There were some of the officers and enlisted men who had had

some experience, and some who had made a study of the tactics who had no practical use of them, and there were others who had at some time been in the regular army. All of these I endeavored to utilize in drilling the regiment, and from these and others there often came quite severe criticisms of Williamson, although they never reached my ears, officially, and not much attention was paid to them, as we were busy drilling the regiment.

Soon after Williamson returned from St. Louis the officers of the regiment all signed a petition asking him to resign as adjutant on account of his inexperience. The petition was presented by Lieutenant Nichols, an officer who had made a study of tactics, and was bright, but like many others had only the experience he had obtained since joining the regiment, but in the drilling I had given the regiment he had become efficient. This action of the officers greatly annoyed Williamson, but I had seen enough of him to know how valuable an officer he was, and instructed him to detail other officers to perform the duties of adjutant on dress parade. While many of them were up in tactics, not having served in that capacity, they all made mistakes when they came out at dress parade, which relieved Williamson of much of the criticism he had been receiving, and the officers who signed this petition, after themselves having an opportunity to perform the duties personally, were much more lenient in their judgment of Williamson. I know that Lieutenant Nichols, who was an excellent officer, and afterwards became lieutenant colonel and colonel of a regiment, became a very warm friend and supporter of Williamson. He, like many others, when they presented the petition to him, did not fully appreciate the duties which fall to an adjutant. A short time afterwards many of the officers, seeing Williamson's attention to his duties and his interest in the regiment, made and signed this endorsement upon the petition: "We, the undersigned, having become satisfied of the competency of Adjutant Williamson and being pleased to acknowledge his earnest desire to discharge his duty, as an act of justice withdraw our names from the within petition, expressing the hope that our intercourse may be long and pleasant." This ended the controversy.

Williamson, in writing about this afterwards, said: "On this occasion I required all my strength to keep myself under control. Colonel Dodge uttered no speech to the com-

mittee; he said absolutely nothing; silence reigned until the end of the dinner. I finally broke the silence by saying to him, 'Well! what shall I do?' His reply was, 'Attend to the duties of your office.' I have always regarded this as a most friendly act, and the one having a greater bearing on my military life than any other that ever came to me. If Colonel Dodge had hesitated, or said less than he did, I should, of course, have handed in my resignation."

During the winter of 1861-2, the regiment started on the Pea Ridge campaign as a part of General Curtis' army of the southwest. In that campaign I commanded a brigade, in which the Fourth Iowa was one of the regiments and Williamson was detailed as my adjutant. At the same time I kept full control of the regiment, and he kept his hands upon all the regimental details. We made a steady march until we reached Springfield. The enemy, under Price, were supposed to be occupying Springfield, and we lined up one night about midnight for the purpose of moving upon and attacking Springfield at daylight. We had put out our skirmish lines and I can distinctly remember hearing Sigel's artillery on our right. The night was dark and I lost my skirmish line and sent Williamson after it. He was unable to find it, and we were in great distress, thinking the enemy had captured it, but about daylight we saw men coming towards us, several of them mounted on horses, and in different costumes. The skirmish line had skirmished into Springfield, and finding no enemy there had taken the leavings of the Confederate army, and were coming out to us in great glee, so that our whole attack upon Springfield was a farce.

From Springfield we pushed on very rapidly, being occasionally halted as we went along by Price's rear guard, and never being able to bring his army into line of battle, though we were often forced into line of battle by the demonstrations of their rear guard, until we reached the country south of Cassville and Benton, where we rested until March 5, when we were aroused and moved back in the night to Sugar Creek, the enemy under Van Dorn being reported as moving north to flank us.

On the first day of the battle of Pea Ridge, while we were facing south, and lined up behind Sugar Creek, building entrenchments, one of the officers of Colonel Phelps' Twenty-sixth Missouri infantry reported to me that the enemy were passing around our right flank to our rear; that on

the road they were taking to Cassville there was a ravine, or what was known as "Cross Hollow," which could easily be obstructed and detain their march. I immediately reported this to General Curtis, and he at once instructed me to detail a force and go there and obstruct the road. I made a detail, and with this officer as guide, went to the spot and spent some time felling trees across the road, and making such obstructions as were possible, as the enemy were at that time coming down the road, and two companies of my own regiment that had followed us had in the dark failed to find us, and we thought they had been cut off by the enemy, but they came into camp all right. General Price, in his report, gives this as one of the reasons for not attacking us at daylight. In referring to this, Williamson says: "Regardless of all opinions, I have always thought and believed the cutting of this timber saved Curtis' army from defeat. The enemy could easily have gotten into position, and had choice of the ground upon which to fight long before daylight, and could, and perhaps would have brought on the battle at daylight, which would have been a surprise."

The delaying of General Price's command gave General Curtis an opportunity and time to change his entire line from Sugar Creek, facing south, to Elkhorn Tavern line, facing north.

In the battle of Pea Ridge, in which the Fourth Iowa took so conspicuous a part, and for which it received so much credit, Williamson's conduct won the commendation and friendship of the regiment. My brigade remained on the field facing and fighting the enemy from the position we took in the morning until nearly dark, while the other brigade which was posted at Elkhorn Tavern was forced to fall back. Along towards night, not hearing any firing in that direction, I sent Williamson over to find Colonel Carr, who commanded the division and ascertain what was going on. The enemy appeared to be on both my flanks, and I did not understand how they got around my left flank. Williamson ran into a column of the enemy that had been coming up the Elkhorn Tavern road, and was actually in our rear and received their point blank fire without being hit. He came back to me and informed me of our condition; that we were virtually surrounded, and I immediately drew out my brigade. My losses had been very heavy, in fact, there was not a field officer left in my command except myself. In falling back we passed very near to a column of the ene-

my, but they evidently did not know who we were, but supposed us to be a portion of their own force and allowed us to pass on by them without making any demonstration. When we had fallen back close to the new line that was occupied by the rest of the division, General Curtis rode up and made inquiries as to what there was in front. I informed him, and told him we were out of ammunition, and he immediately ordered me to fix bayonets and charge the enemy. The brigade heard the order, and, before I could repeat it, they had fixed bayonets, and were charging over the same ground at a double quick, but we found the enemy had retired at the same time we did, and we returned and took up our position in the new line that had been formed for the night. On the second day Williamson was wounded, but kept the field. The third day's fight was very short. The defeat of the enemy on our left by Colonel Davis, and the loss of their two generals, McCullough and McIntosh, caused them to leave for Arkansas, and General Van Dorn, who was in command, sent word to General Price, who commanded in our front, to make a demonstration in the morning and retire by way of White River, and, in fact, to get out as best he could. As soon as we moved forward on the morning of the third day the enemy retired, and we could see them retreating in great disorder, spreading out over the hills. My brigade had the lead in following towards White River, and had commenced capturing stragglers of the enemy, but I was recalled in a short time, and returned to hold possession of the battlefield. Williamson went personally to General Curtis to inform him of what we had discovered, and what we thought could be accomplished by following the enemy in that direction, but because Sigel's command had fallen back toward Cassville General Curtis held us on the field which we had fought so hard to win.

After this action the lieutenant colonel of the regiment resigned. On March 23, 1862, at Keetsville, Mo., the officers unanimously recommended Williamson for lieutenant colonel, stating that in the late battle of Pea Ridge he behaved with such gallantry and bravery as to merit their hearty commendation. The officers also secured the opinion of the enlisted men, and reported them as being unanimously in favor of his promotion.

On April 4 Williamson was appointed lieutenant colonel, and took command of the regiment, as I had left it soon after the battle of Pea Ridge, having been made a

brigadier general for its action in that battle, and I did not see it again until the Chattanooga campaign, although I was in constant communication with it from the beginning until the end of the war. Williamson communicated with me regularly, giving me all the news in relation to the regiment, and asking my advice in regard to nearly everything of importance connected with it.

On the 12th of April Curtis' army began a rather memorable march from their camp near Keetsville through Missouri and Arkansas to Helena, on the Mississippi river, where they arrived on July 14, 1862. The march was long and wearisome, and it rained continually. The force was short of rations and were dependent upon the little that could be found in the country. They were out of touch with the rest of the world and received no mail for nearly three months.

During this march Williamson wrote me many letters. In one, written May 16, 1862, he says: "General Curtis has been here for some time, and came out to meet us today. I was not expecting him, but had taken great care to bring in the regiment in good order, carrying both our national and regimental colors. I was complimented for the appearance and good order of our regiment, although some of the boys was entirely barefoot. We cannot get shoes."

On May 22 the unanimous recommendation of the officers of the regiment for the appointment of Williamson as colonel was forwarded to the governor, who consulted me in relation to the appointment, as he had done in the appointment of all officers in the regiment, and said in one of his letters to me: "All the commissions you recommended have been sent on, except as to the captain of the battery." One of the underlying reasons for the efficiency of the Iowa troops in the field and the confidence their superior officers had in them came from the fact that after a regiment entered the field Governor Kirkwood invariably took the advice of the officers as to appointments and promotions in it.

On July 31, 1862, Williamson received his commission as colonel. On July 15 he wrote me from Helena: "Can you not bring some influence to bear that will get this regiment under your command? The men and officers desire it very much." I made application for the regiment several times, but as my commands were far away from where it was serving, I never succeeded in obtaining its services.

The regiment remained at Helena hunting guerrillas and reconnoitering through the country on both sides of the Mississippi river. The climate and malaria caused much sickness.

On December 23, 1862, General Sherman arrived with a fleet en route to Vicksburg. The Fourth Iowa was taken along, with others, and assigned to Gen. J. M. Thayer's brigade of Morgan's Third division of the right wing of the Thirteenth army corps, commanded by General Steele. In the battle of Vicksburg Bayou Williamson was wounded, but did not leave the field. The regiment lost heavily in killed and wounded, but the Yazoo water that the command had to drink ultimately caused the death of more men than were lost in the battles of Vicksburg Bayou and Arkansas Post. In writing to me in relation to this attack, Williamson said: "After being under fire all day until about 3 o'clock, I received an order to charge the enemy's entrenchments right in the face of a battery that was planted above them. I never had seen the ground over which I was to pass, nor were directions given me as to the exact point where I should make the attack. I was only told to go forward, and that I would be supported by other regiments. Of course, I did not want to be told a second time, but ordered the regiment forward at a double-quick, General Thayer going at my side. After getting under the enemy's fire I learned what I had not previously known, that there was immediately in front a narrow, deep swamp, which could only be crossed by the flank, which I was compelled to do, with a direct fire in front, and a cross-fire from the batteries on the right and left. As soon as the head of the line crossed I filed to the right and brought forward into line, and then we were enfiladed by what was before us, and were so exposed until we gained the first line of entrenchments and passed some distance beyond them. Here the discovery was made that we were not supported, and General Thayer said: 'My God! what is to be done?' Knowing that it was certain destruction to a large portion of the regiment to fall back, and that it could not be but little worse to stay, I said to him that I would hold the position I then had until reinforcements came up, or until it was rendered certain that they were not coming. I held the place about half an hour, until I could see none of our troops on either flank, or in our rear, and no hope of support; then came the perilous task of getting out. I gave the order to fall back, and got the regiment off in good order. When

I got back I found that the Thirtieth Iowa, which was to follow, had been ordered to the support of somebody else on the right, and the balance of the regiments which were to follow were lying on their bellies in the timber. My regiment and I had apparently been forgotten by everybody except General Thayer, who was weeping like a child on account of General Morgan having ordered away the first regiment which was to support me, and halting the balance of the brigade, which, I imagine, however, was not hard to halt.

General Thayer is a brave man, and I believe that if his arrangements had not been interfered with we would have gone entirely through the enemy's lines and carried the hill. There was gross mismanagement some place about General Thayer, but none on his part.

General Thayer, in his report of the battle after mentioning Colonel Williamson's name six times, says: "The conduct of the noble Fourth, both officers and men, throughout this terrible ordeal, is worthy of the highest praise. They pressed steadily and firmly forward, there was no flinching; they entered the enemy's works in splendid style. Colonel Williamson marched at the head of his column, and by his boldness and heroic courage won my unqualified admiration. He is deserving of the favorable consideration of his government. He was struck by three balls, but not severely wounded, and remained on the field the balance of the day."

The action of Colonel Williamson and his regiment in this attack received the commendation of his superior officers, and a board of officers authorized the regiment to place upon its banners, "First at Chickasaw Bayou." This is the highest compliment that could be paid to Colonel Williamson and his regiment for their action.

Colonel Williamson and his regiment returned from Chickasaw Bayou with Sherman's army, under the command of General McClernand, and took part in the battle of Arkansas Post. In writing me in relation to this battle, Williamson said: "The regiment was under fire all day at Arkansas Post, when another charge was ordered, but immediately countermanded, as the enemy ran up the white flag, just at the moment the regiment was ready to charge. If we had made the last charge, but few would have been left, as the enemy's entrenchments and rifle pits were well

formed, and we would have been compelled to pass over a very level, open piece of ground to reach them."

The army returned to the Mississippi river, and landed at Young's Point, opposite Vicksburg. Thayer's brigade camped upon the levee. The river was very high, and the men had to throw down brush, trees and debris to lie upon to keep out of the water. On the 2nd of April the regiment moved with Steele's division to Black Bayou, Rolling Fork and Sunflower, fighting guerrillas and Confederate forces all the time. Williamson said: "The expedition destroyed enormous quantities of corn and other supplies, burning great quantities of cotton, cotton gins, houses, etc. The march was through a very prolific and fertile country, and slaves by the thousands joined the columns, bringing all their belongings with them, expressing great joy and offering prayers for Mr. Lincoln. The fervent shouting of 'Glory to God' was impressed upon my mind, and formed scenes never to be forgotten.

"On our return Colonel Lorenzo Thomas visited our army, sent by the president to state the facts to the army and obtain its opinion as to organizing colored regiments and mustering them into the service. All the officers present were requested to express themselves upon the subject, and I was the first called upon. I favored the organization of the negroes, saying I believed they would make good soldiers, as I had seen many cases of bravery and devotion on their part, and had no doubt they would become efficient under proper officers. Somewhat to my surprise the short speech I made was applauded, as I had no knowledge how the army felt. It was decided by Colonel Thomas before he got down from the wagon from which he spoke to the command that he would then and there detail officers to form regiments out of the negroes who had followed General Steele's command in the late expedition. This was one of the most decisive and notable incidents I witnessed during the war."

After this expedition, Colonel Williamson took part, under General Grant, in the campaign against Vicksburg, and was camped above Vicksburg on the Mississippi river, near the head of the proposed canal. On January 23, 1862, in writing to me about the canal, he said: "The canal which we are working on will never amount to anything for the reason that if a sufficient rise should take place to wash it out, it would wash the whole army away, as there is not a spot

within fifty miles that does not overflow, except Vicksburg. I have not more than three hundred men for duty; the whole army is but little better than a hospital. I fear that I have lost my own health; I have not seen a well day for three months, and have lost thirty pounds of flesh, but I shall never give up while I can walk."

On May 1, 1863, Williamson, with his regiment, commenced the march to Grand Gulf, crossing after the rest of the army, and took part in the capture of Jackson. After two days they moved from Jackson, by way of Clinton, Bolton and Bridgeport, to Vicksburg. During all this time Williamson was very ill, but remained with his command. On May 18, the Fourth Iowa, under the eye of General Sherman, fought its way to a position not far from where it made its first attack upon Vicksburg. On the 19th Colonel Williamson took part in the attack, but the ground over which they had to move was impassable, and Colonel Milo Smith, of the Twenty-ninth Iowa, was killed while consulting with Williamson as to how they should get their regiments out without serious loss. Up to the surrender his command worked at sapping and mining, getting close up to the rebel entrenchments. Colonel Williamson was obliged to take a leave of absence before the surrender of Vicksburg on account of his own illness and the critical illness of his wife. He returned to his command within thirty days, but this leave no doubt prevented his being recommended for promotion, for at a later day when General Sherman met Mrs. Williamson, he said: "You are the little woman for whom General Williamson sacrificed the hope of promotion by going to see," and then added, with kindly humor, "I don't blame him now."

Upon Williamson's return to Vicksburg, he was assigned to duty in command of a good strong fighting brigade, the Third brigade, First division, Fifteenth army corps.

General Grant's general order, dated Vicksburg, Miss., October 15, promulgates the report of a board of officers, appointed for the purpose of determining the names of the battles that the regiments of the Fifteenth army corps were entitled to inscribe upon their colors and guidons. The report authorized the Fourth Iowa to inscribe upon its colors

and guidons, "Pea Ridge, First at Chickasaw Bayou, Arkansas Post, Vicksburg, siege and assault, 19th and 22d, Jackson."

On the 22d of September, 1863, Williamson's brigade took steamers to Memphis and marched to Corinth, Miss., where Colonel Williamson took command of the Second brigade, known as the Iowa brigade, First division, General Osterhaus commanding, Fifteenth army corps, General Sherman commanding, and took part in the movement towards Decatur, Ala., fighting at Dalton Station on the 20th, at Cherokee Station on the 21st, where Colonel Torrence of the Thirtieth Iowa was killed, at Barton Station on the 26th, and at Tuscumbia on the 27th, taking the town. As showing the enemy's force in front, Colonel Williamson quotes my dispatch to General Sherman as being Wheeler's and Lee's divisions of cavalry, Walker's and Roddy's brigades of cavalry and Forest with 350 men south of the Tennessee and east of Tuscumbia. On the 30th Williamson's brigade crossed the Tennessee at Chickasaw Landing, and marched with the rest of the Army of the Tennessee to Chattanooga. They reached Stevenson on November 16, and he said: "The road from there to Chattanooga was well nigh impassable, not only from being cut up by the large trains, but from the large number of dead mules left in the roadway." On November 23 they arrived at Lookout creek. The pontoon bridge crossing the Tennessee was broken that night, and the First division, Fifteenth army corps, General Osterhaus commanding, was assigned to General Hooker's command.

On November 24, 1864, Colonel Williamson's brigade carried the point of Lookout Mountain, fighting above the clouds, and was the first brigade to break through the enemy's lines, and greatly distinguished itself. I have this from Colonel Daniel Butterfield, General Hooker's chief of staff, who informed me that in going to Geary's division, that came from the Army of the Potomac, seeking to ascertain the position and condition of the troops, he found Osterhaus' division furthest advanced, and troops of Williamson's brigade just capturing Lookout Point, and when the New York monument was erected he intended that the names of the regiments composing Williamson's brigade should appear on that monument as having captured the point.

General Osterhaus in his report, after describing the taking of the point of Lookout Mountain, says: "The rebels charged with great vehemence, and attempted to regain the numerous entrenchments they had thrown up all around to the White house. They were, however, signally repulsed and my regiments held this important point during the night. The enemy, fully aware of the importance of the position gained by us, made several attempts to dislodge us in the fore part of the night. . . . After midnight he abstained, and commenced his retreat toward Missionary Ridge."

General Osterhaus in his report upon Missionary Ridge, says: "With a view of flanking the enemy's position in Roswell's Gap, General Woods, with the First brigade, was ordered to take the ravine on the right. Colonel Williamson's Second brigade ascended the steep Missionary Ridge. . . . striking both their flanks, and, their line of retreat threatened, the enemy hastily evacuated the gap. . . . They had to leave their artillery, wagons, ambulances and subsistence stores in our hands." Speaking of the second attack, he said: "The Second brigade, Williamson's, fired a salvo into the terrified rebels. . . . Finding their escape impossible, they obeyed my orders and laid down their arms. My division took over two thousand prisoners and one piece of artillery."

Writing of the battle of Ringgold, fought November 28, Williamson says: "Taylor's ridge at Ringgold, is a bold, rocky faced ridge, and very difficult of ascent. Bragg's army had all the time they wanted to get there, and to form in line on this crest almost out of any danger from an attacking force. I do not know where the order originated, but I was ordered by General Osterhaus to go forward, keeping my right well toward the gap. I endeavored to go up, and did go up, under a killing fire, in which I saw more valuable lives thrown away, absolutely sacrificed, without any apparent purpose or reason (as it afterward developed) than I have ever seen out of so small a number before, but except what General Osterhaus says in his report, this whole battle seems to have been lost sight of in history, so far as I can learn. In the attack my brigade lost over eight hundred men."

After Chattanooga, General Sherman in his report says: "I must say that it is but justice that colonels of regiments who have so long and so well commanded brigades shall be

commissioned to the grade which they have filled with so much usefulness and credit to the public service, namely J. A. Williamson, Fourth Regiment Iowa volunteers.”

For the action of Colonel Williamson and the Fourth Iowa in the battles of Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge and Ringgold, General Grant, on February 4, 1864, upon the report of a board of officers, authorized the regiment to inscribe “Chattanooga” upon its colors.

After the battle of Chattanooga, Colonel Williamson with his brigade, returned to Woodville, Ala., and remained for the winter. On January 1, 1864, the Fourth Iowa re-enlisted. On February 26th they started for home on veteran furlough, and arrived at Des Moines on March 9th. The city gave them a magnificent reception, and the legislature adopted the following resolutions:

“Whereas, We have learned that the veterans of the Fourth Iowa have re-enlisted for three years, or during the war, and that they are now on their way to this city on furlough, to enjoy for a short time the blessings of the domestic circle, and the citizens of Des Moines are preparing to give them a proper reception; and deeming it our duty as their representatives, to express our appreciation of their gallantry and their services in the suppression of the rebellion, therefore, be it

“Resolved, By the General Assembly of the state of Iowa, That we have watched with pride and admiration the Fourth Iowa infantry, as step by step they have borne the ensign of the free, on the memorable fields of Pea Ridge, Chickasaw Bayou, Arkansas Post, Jackson, Vicksburg, siege and assault, Cherokee, Caney Creek, Tuscumbia, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge and Ringgold, and in their long and weary marches, enduring all the privations and hardships of a soldier’s life, they have toiled on and fought for home, kindred and country, until the mute graves of their comrades in arms point in sadness to the remnants of brave men, who have honored their state and added to the glory of the nation.

“Resolved, That in the re-enlistment of said regiment, we have the strongest evidence of their attachment to the principles of civil liberty; and that their love of country is paramount to all other considerations, and entitles them to the lasting honor and gratitude of those whose firesides have been protected by their arms.

“Resolved, That as a token of our confidence and regard for the distinguished services of that regiment, we will adjourn and attend in a body the reception of the veterans on their return to this city.

“Resolved, That the governor be requested to present them with a copy of these resolutions, and on behalf of the members of this general assembly bid them welcome to the capital of the state whose honor they have kept so sacredly untarnished.”

When their furlough expired they returned to Woodville. Williamson in writing me from Des Moines April 1, 1864, said: “The boys have been well received everywhere in Iowa and have been guilty of only one lawless act, and in that I think they are sustained by nearly all loyal men.”

On the first of May the Second brigade, First division, Fifteenth army corps, under Colonel Williamson, left Woodville for Chattanooga to take part in the Atlanta campaign.

In the battle of Resaca they attacked with the rest of the Fifteenth corps, and Williamson's brigade occupied the town.

At the battle of Dallas his brigade held the extreme right of the Army of the Tennessee, and held a position in advance of his corps, and was continually attacked for two or three days.

At the great battle of Atlanta on the 22d of July Williamson was on the extreme right of the Army of the Tennessee. His division was commanded by General Charles R. Wood, and when General J. C. Brown's division of Stewart's Confederate corps broke through Morgan L. Smith's division of the Fifteenth corps on the Augusta road, capturing DeGrasse's battery and threatening to cut our army in two, Colonel Williamson with his brigade, under the eye and orders of General Sherman, moved down the flank of Brown's division, while a brigade of the Sixteenth army corps under Colonel Mersey of the Ninth Illinois Infantry, which General Logan had come to me to obtain, moved on the direct front, and the two recaptured the line and retook the battery. Williamson says: “I left the Ninth Iowa in the works and sent the Fourth Iowa to the right to occupy a rebel battery which commanded the head of a ravine which led to our line in the only place where there were no entrenchments. The regiment had not more than formed before it was assaulted by a brigade of rebel infantry under

Colonel Baker, and a very stubborn fight ensued. The regiment nobly held the position and finally repulsed the assault, inflicting great loss upon the rebels in killed, wounded and prisoners."

In this attack Lieutenant Colonel Nichols, who commanded the regiment, was wounded.

In writing of the battle of Ezra Church on the 28th of August, Williamson said: "General Logan, commanding the Fifteenth army corps, came to me on foot after the battle had opened, as it was impossible to come on horseback, and cautioned me, saying, from his knowledge of the way the enemy was moving; that I would have a hard time, and that the success of the battle might depend upon what was done on my front. He said, 'If you will say that you can and will hold this point I shall feel comparatively safe as to the result.' I answered him that I would do my best; that he knew my command and knew that they were not much accustomed to giving way, and that we would hold that point as long as there was a man left. General Logan had feared the determined effort of the enemy that was made to break the line at that point was such as I had never witnessed during the whole war. They came in double lines, and kept coming. The nature of the ground, however, was very much in our favor, and it appeared that if our fire was too high for the front line it was sure to catch the next, or the next, and later, when I looked over the battle-field it had the appearance of a whole line of battle that had fallen with the front line only a few yards away from us. This was the most sickening sight that I had ever witnessed. It looked more like a slaughter than a battle."

Governor Stone of Iowa, visited the Army of the Tennessee on the day of this battle, and General Sherman in conversing with him, said: "Colonel Williamson is at the front with his brigade, pitching in, as he always does."

On September 1 Colonel Williamson was slightly wounded in the hand.

In the final swing of Sherman's army to the rear of Atlanta, Williamson's brigade took part in all the engagements. It won additional laurels at Lovejoy Station, when the Fourth Iowa under the eye of the commander of the division, defeated the enemy and saved one of our batteries.

Williamson, in his report of the whole campaign, Chattanooga to Atlanta, says: "So closes the record of this memorable campaign. I could not make it more brief and do

justice to the regiments of my brigade. The vast amount of labor done by this command, in addition to the marching and fighting, and the cheerfulness and zeal with which it has been performed is sufficient to encourage the best hopes for the success of our army. The casualties of the brigade during the campaign had been 280."

General Charles R. Wood, commanding the division, commended Colonel Williamson for gallantry, especially on the 22d and 28th of July, also Col. S. D. Nichols, commanding Fourth Iowa Infantry.

Major General Logan, commanding the Fifteenth corps, on September 13, in making his report, asked for the promotion of Colonel Williamson to the rank of brigadier general. When the campaign was over General Sherman wrote the following characteristic letter:

"Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi, in the field, Gaylesville, Ala., Oct. 24, 1864.—General H. W. Halleck, Chief of Staff, etc.—General: I have always designed to canvass the claims to promotion of all aspirants in the army, so as to save the President the invidious task of judging among so many worthy men, all of whom can only be known to him by the record. But events and movements have followed each other so rapidly that my army commanders have not been able to attend to the matter, but have sent into my office the detached papers of each. These I enclose herewith endorsed with my own individual opinion. I have not General Thomas' list, but will instruct him to send it direct from Nashville, where he now is. If necessary to promote to divisions and brigades the officers now exercising the rank of major general and brigadier general, it be necessary to create vacancies, I do think the exigencies of the country would warrant the mustering out of the same number of generals now on the list that have not done service in the past year.

"Among the colonels aspiring to the rank of brigadier general I can only name Colonel J. A. Williamson, Fourth Iowa; Colonel Thomas J. Harrison, Eighth Indiana cavalry, and Colonel R. H. G. Minty, of Second Michigan cavalry, who have long and well commanded brigades, and who seem to have no special friends to aid them in advancement.

"W. T. Sherman, Major General."

After the battle at Lovejoy Station, Williamson's brigade returned to Atlanta, and took part from October 3 to 26 in the pursuit of Hood's army to the rear, and then returned again to Atlanta.

On December 19, 1864, Colonel Williamson was made brevet brigadier general for gallantry and good conduct in the campaign against Vicksburg, Chattanooga and Atlanta.

In the march to the sea, Williamson's brigade became the Third of the First division, Fifteenth corps. They left Atlanta November 15, and took part in the fights at Griswoldsville on November 22, Ogeechee river December 7 and 9, and Savannah December 10 to 21.

After the capture of Savannah, Colonel Williamson was appointed a brigadier general on January 13, 1865, and soon after left his command and returned to Iowa by way of Washington and New York. Upon learning this I immediately applied to the war department for his assignment to my command, the department of Missouri, but received word from the war department that his commission had not yet been signed, but was on the president's table. On March 14, 1865, he was appointed brevet major general, U. S. V. It was May 20 before his commissions and orders reached him, and early in June he reported to me at St. Louis, and I assigned him to the command of the district of Missouri, in which position he served until July, 1865, when I relieved him from his command and ordered him to report to me in person for duty in the Indian campaigns. On this campaign he was assigned to duty on my staff, and accompanied me to Colorado, and north to Fort Laramie and the Powder river. While he was with me the order for his muster out was issued August 24, 1865, but he did not receive it until he returned to Fort Leavenworth, and was mustered out November 13, 1865.

The government awarded him a medal of honor for the following service: "Leading his regiment against a superior force strongly entrenched, and holding his ground when all support had been withdrawn." This was a suitable closing of his military career as a soldier in the civil war.

While he was in the army, the Iowa state republican convention in 1864 elected Colonel Williamson chairman of its delegation to the national republican convention,

which met that year in Baltimore, but he was then engaged in the Atlanta campaign, and declined to leave the field. Four years later he served as chairman of the Iowa delegation at the national convention held in Chicago.

In 1866, after the close of the war, General Williamson returned to Des Moines and resumed his law practice. He removed that year to Fort Smith, Ark., and while residing there returned to Iowa soon after I was nominated for congress, and upon his own motion stumped my district with Governor Kirkwood. He wrote many letters to the comrades and his friends. My duties were such that I was obliged to be absent from the district. In a letter from Des Moines, dated September 28, 1866, he said: "I regret that I did not see you when I was out at your place. Kirkwood and I went the rounds and spoke at the places advertised for Kirkwood, and we found everything all right. You will be elected by a large majority, larger than any man ever had in the district."

In 1867 General Williamson was talked of and urged to become a candidate for governor, and his own county sent a full delegation in his favor.

He had been offered an appointment in the regular army, and on January 3, 1867, wrote me in relation to it as follows: "I could not accept a position in the regular army. My family is large and are of the age to need me at home."

In 1863 General Williamson and myself were delegates to the republican national convention.

In the fall of 1868 Williamson took charge of the land and lot agency of the Union Pacific railroad west of Green River, and was with me until the completion of that road in 1869. He then became largely interested in western lands and mines, and went abroad in those interests. The panic of 1873 stopped for a time all negotiations in London, and he returned home.

In 1876 General Grant tendered him the position of commissioner of the general land office, which he accepted, and remained in that position until 1881. During this time he was chairman of the public land commission, created by act of congress May, 1879, to codify and review the laws for the disposal of public lands, and examining and reporting upon the character of arable and arid lands, and the mining and timber lands, and in this examination he rendered very valuable services to the government.

In 1881 he became land commissioner of the Atlantic & Pacific railroad, subsequently its general solicitor, and final-

ly its president. Upon leaving this position in 1892, he retired from active life.

In 1891 he married his second wife, Miss Maria Hall, who survives him.

For seven years he has been a resident of New York city, spending his summers abroad, or at his summer home in Jamestown, Rhode Island. In 1900 it was my pleasure to accompany him to Carlsbad, Austria. We spent three delightful months together at Spa and on the continent, and finally separated at Paris, where he remained and I returned home.

During his seven years' residence in New York we were frequently together at the club, and socially, and we spent many delightful days and evenings together discussing old experiences and campaigns. It was then I learned what a devoted student and reader my old comrade was, and how much he had gathered up and stored away of what he had seen in his travels and from his extensive reading. He took great interest in all scientific works, especially in connection with the lives, character and habits of the ancients, and visited many of the places where these investigations were going on.

He was also in continuous communication with the old soldiers who served under him, aiding them with advice and financially. In his later years he attended yearly the meetings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, and his death will bring great sorrow to that army, as he took an active interest in all its doings and knew personally nearly every one of its members. He was also a regular attendant of the meetings of the New York Commandery of the Loyal Legion, La Fayette Post, G. A. R., and of the Union League club of New York. He was also a member of the Army and Navy club of Washington.

It was only within the last year that his health began to fail, and almost up to the day of his death he was planning for the future, but he lay down and went to sleep, quietly and peacefully, just as he wished to, and was laid at rest in Rock Creek cemetery, Washington, D. C. His pall-bearers were General G. M. Dodge, Hon. Frank W. Palmer, Hon. M. D. O'Connell, General Alfred E. Bates, U. S. A., Captain Charles Train, U. S. N., Mr. Colgate Hoyt, and Mr. C. M. Whittington. Representatives of the government, delegations from the different societies of which he was a member, and from the general land office, were present, and

with many others remembered him with beautiful floral tributes.

General Williamson leaves a widow and four daughters by his first wife—Miss Haidee Williamson, Mrs. Warner B. Bayley, wife of Commander Bayley of the navy; Mrs. George R. Stearns of Augusta, Ga., and Mrs. Roy Jones of Santa Monica, California.

General Williamson was of fine, commanding appearance and inspired confidence in all with whom he was associated. He was prompt in action, a gallant soldier, a genial and model citizen. The official reports show him to have been a faithful and efficient public official, and the war records testify to the truth of the remarks made by General Grant, when he visited Des Moines and inquired particularly about General Williamson of "Ret" Clarkson; he spoke of him in the highest terms as an excellent soldier who had received less reward for his services and the work accomplished than any other officer of his rank in the service.

His own state of Iowa has placed his medallion bust on its soldiers' monument in testimony of the honor he has brought her, and the credit he had done himself in the civil war, and every comrade who has served under him will say with me, that he has answered the last roll call beloved and regretted by all his comrades, and by everyone who knew him.



